# Justin Welby forgives notorious child abuser John Smyth



Justin Welby, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, has publicly stated that he forgives John Smyth, the Church of England's most notorious child abuser, in his first interview since his resignation last year. Dr Welby expressed a desire to retreat into “total obscurity” following his departure, which stemmed from a comprehensive review that highlighted his failures in addressing the abuse allegations within the Church.

The Makin Review revealed that Smyth had committed "abhorrent" abuses against more than 100 boys and young men over several decades and suggested that Dr Welby had not done enough to ensure that Smyth faced justice. The investigator found that the abuse had been covered up within the Church, with accusations suggesting that Dr Welby did not adequately report concerns to law enforcement.

In a conversation with the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg, the former Archbishop apologised to Smyth's victims, acknowledging his "personal failures" in the management of the abuse claims. He stated, “I am utterly sorry and feel a deep sense of personal failure, both for the victims of Smyth not being picked up sufficiently after 2017 when we knew the extent of it, and for my own personal failures.”

When questioned about whether he would forgive Smyth, who passed away in 2018 without facing legal accountability, Dr Welby replied, “Yes, I think if he was alive and I saw him but it's not me he has abused. He's abused the victims and survivors. So, whether I forgive or not is, to a large extent, irrelevant.” He also expressed profound shame regarding his resignation speech, which some survivors considered “crass and insensitive”.

The interview, however, has prompted a backlash from some of Smyth's victims. One survivor, identified as Graham, expressed that he cannot forgive Dr Welby while feeling ignored and denied the truth. He stated that had Dr Welby contacted him in a sincere manner back in 2017 to acknowledge his mistakes, he would have been willing to forgive him “immediately.” Graham highlighted the lack of personal outreach from Dr Welby as a significant reason for his continued resentment.

Dame Jasvinder Sanghera, who previously led an independent board looking into Church abuse until 2023, also criticised Dr Welby’s remarks, deeming them "absolute rubbish".

In the same BBC interview, Dr Welby indicated support for fully independent safeguarding measures within the Church of England and expressed openness to having a female bishop as his successor. The Church is currently in the process of appointing the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, with an announcement expected in the autumn.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2024-11/archbishop-justin-welby-resignation-sex-abuse-report.html> - This article supports the fact that Archbishop Justin Welby resigned following the publication of the Makin Review, which highlighted his role in handling allegations of abuse by John Smyth. It also mentions his acknowledgment of personal failures in addressing the abuse.
* <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/statement-archbishop-canterbury-0> - This statement from Archbishop Justin Welby provides context to his resignation and his reflections on the failures in safeguarding within the Church of England.
* <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/statements-resignation-archbishop-canterbury> - This press release includes statements supporting the resignation of the Archbishop and the need for ongoing change in the Church's safeguarding practices.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - The source article discusses Justin Welby's post-resignation interview, where he expressed forgiveness towards John Smyth and acknowledged his personal failures.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68272443> - While not directly linked here, BBC would typically host interviews or reports related to Justin Welby's statements and actions following his resignation.